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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the proceedings of a seminar sponsored by the International Federation of Library Associations' (IFLA) Round Table of Editors of Library Journals (RTELJ) on the nature of library journals and on means of improving them. The emphasis of the seminar was on journal editing. Brief reviews are given of papers presented by seven experienced editors on the following topics: (1) the purposes and goals of professional journals in general and librarianship journals in particular; (2) the formulation of editorial policy; (3) the identification and choice of contributors; (4) typography, making up, typographical aesthetics, and proofreading; (5) technical problems with the printing of journals and alternatives to printing; (6) advertising; (7) book reviews, their forms and functions; (8) costing and account keeping; and (9) standards for library journals. Twenty issues raised by speakers are outlined and nine recommendations made by the participants for transmission to IFLA conclude the report. (DMC)

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BETTER JOURNALS FOR THE LIBRARY PROFESSION

Report on a Seminar held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on 30-31 August 1982.

It has become common practice for IFLA to encourage, and on some occasions to support financially, the organization of special seminars of interest to some sections or groups of IFLA. The reasons are obvious: as the membership of IFLA has widened and members come to attend the annual conference, it is professionally and financially attractive for members to stay on, or come a few days before the IFLA Conference to the same meeting place for detailed discussions on specific topics. These seminars or workshops are usually restricted to a small number of dedicated librarians and information science specialists which fact makes for a better level of discussion and a greater likelihood of producing useful resolutions and maybe outlines for future action.

Within such a framework, the IFLA Round Table of Editors of Library Journals organized a successful seminar on the nature of library journals and on means for improving them. It was attended by 28 persons who considered the topic sufficiently important to extend their stay in Montreal beyond the IFLA Conference.

The organizers of the seminar are very much indebted to Associate Professor Dr Hans Möller, Director of the Graduate School of Library Science at McGill University, who with the support of the University's Vice-Chancellor provided the venue for the seminar, and fed and housed all visiting participants. The pleasant meeting room, the comfort of the lodgings within easy walking distance of the University, and the generous provision of breakfasts, lunches and three formal dinners in elegant surroundings, made this seminar a memorable event in the history of the RTELJ.

But it should not be thought that food and drink alone have made the seminar a success. All present were well satisfied with the organization and the addresses offered during the nine sessions by seven experienced editors - every one of whom would want to be the first to say that

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if their topic had been thought worth while listening to, it was due to the contributions made by the seminar participants.

The subtitle of the seminar describes adequately its purpose: "An examination of editorial practices from conception to the printed page", and the individual papers more or less followed that functional approach to journal editing.

After some preliminary remarks by the Seminar Director, D.H.Borchardt (Australia), the current chairman of the IFLA RTELJ, Russell Bowden (U.K.) opened the meeting with a well organized summary of the purposes and goals of professional journals in general and librarianship journals in particular. He stressed that the quality of our journals will make or mar the effectiveness of our efforts to establish and maintain strong lines of communication between the profession, governments and the community at large. Russell Bowden then spelt out the several fundamental issues which a professional journal must address: communication between members of the profession and between the governing organs of the profession and the membership at large; links with other professional organizations whose interests and practices impinge either permanently or temporarily on the profession to whom the journal is primarily directed; relations with state and local authorities; creation and maintenance of contacts with the international professional community; ensure that the association's journal does not cost more than the association can afford.

Russell Bowden finally reminded the seminar that library and information science is still not very highly regarded as a profession and those who are responsible for the profession's journals must ensure that the four freesoms - flow of information, free expression, copyright, and data protection - are properly safeguarded.

Next on the programme was D.H.Borchardt who dealt with two main themes in a double session: the formulation of editorial policy and the identification and choice of contributors.

On the topic of editorial policy, Borchardt pointed to the difference between commercially produced journals and those which are owned and run by associations. Irrespective of who provides the financial backing, a

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journal without a clearly recognizable editorial policy is not likely to be widely read. However, in spite of a firmly established editorial policy, a professional journal must carry a variety of views and allow different views to appear in print. Since the majority of library professional journals are association organs, he pointed up three particular functions which association journals should carry out: report on association activities, print professional papers of high quality, serve as newsletters to inform the readership of members' activities. Borchardt stressed also that these functions should be carried out at a level appropriate to the socio-economic conditions of the association and its members.

Next Borchardt spoke of the qualities necessary in a good editor, the respective merits of having either a competent professional with little experience or knowledge of editing and publishing, or an expert journalistic editor who knows little of librarianship. Some of the problems inherent in that situation can be overcome by appointing associate editors with specific responsibilities. However, one editor and one only must be in charge of the journal - otherwise disaster will follow.

The constitution and nature of an editorial board was discussed next. This aspect of journal management elicited many comments from the seminar members. While Borchardt spoke mainly against active participation by editorial boards in the running of a journal, some speakers expressed the view that editorial boards could play a helpful role with regard to promotion, selection of articles and, above all, policy formulation. Many members supported the proposal that there might be two boards: one advisory board and a smaller working or executive board.

The discussion on contributors and contributions followed the same lines as those opened up by Borchardt's first address, but differences of opinion made it a rather lively session. Members reported on quite specific editorial practices and it soon became evident that these practices are at least as dependent on the personalities involved as on written up policy guide lines.

The meeting expressed concern over the inability of many professional members to write plain English and to present their ideas in a moderately

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good style. Some comments were directed at the failure of the schools of librarianship to foster writing ability and at the elimination of the thesis requirement in many schools. Means of improving written expression were discussed, and it was noted that some editors go out of their way to help younger colleagues to improve their articles and papers, while others just accepted contributions as received.

The question of publishing conference proceedings and of higher degree theses was briefly touched. The seminar agreed to make three recommendations for transmittal to the RTELJ:

-That efforts be made to develop writing skills within the library profession;

-That a worldwide directory of library publications be developed;

-That a practical workshop be held at the IFLA conference in Nairobi in 1984, to assist the developing countries with their problems in the field of library publications.

Richard Dougherty (USA) spoke next on the important questions of typography, making up, typographical aesthetics and proofreading. Though not wishing to lay down universal rules for the shape and size of journals, Dougherty emphasized that every journal must tell its contributors what they are expected to do with respect to the presentation of MSS. The points raised were all of a practical and common sense nature and the advice given was non-technical - all of which made for a warm reception of Dougherty's address. The distinction between the function of an editor and a copy-editor was spelled out and brought the discussion back to a point already raised in the previous session with regard to the quality of writing. One seminar member in particular warned against too much interference with the author's own style. The notion of sterilizing original approaches became the subject of several speakers and it was urged that copy editors should not change the substance or style of an article.

Technical problems with the printing of journals and alternatives to printing were examined by Anthony Olden (Nigeria). His current involvement with a Glasgow (Scotland) based journal and with two journals published and printed in Nigeria gave him an opportunity to compare the

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practical difficulties of journal editors in developing countries with those in industrially advanced societies. After listing the many causes of printing delays that trouble an editor's life in an underindustrialized country, Olden advocated the greater use of simple duplicating machines to produce journals for the profession. Even this process has its inherent difficulties because capable typists are at a premium in developing countries.

Members of the seminar mentioned several other means of producing journals that would achieve a reasonable appearance, but agreed that the core difficulty remained at the typing stage. Their followed a short exchange of views on how IFLA could best help professional journals in developing countries and it was suggested the RTELJ should try to get financial assistance for associations anxious to publish such journals.

The next two sessions were concerned with specific features of many journals: advertising and book reviews. Laurie Boves (Canada) reported on the experiences of the *Canadian library journal* which had done a readership survey to ascertain, among other matters, whether advertisements were approved of and what sort of advertising was disliked. She pointed out that if advertising is to be successful in terms of income for the journal, it must be properly cared for. An 'advertising representative' will be needed to sell advertising space and thought will have to be given to layout and distribution of advertisements in each issue. The costing of advertisements will have to be carefully examined because the printing costs per issue will rise substantially with the inclusion of advertisements. She concluded by reporting that currently 30% of the cost of producing the *Canadian library journal* is carried by advertisers.

Donald Davis (USA) read a well prepared paper on the importance of book reviews, their forms and functions. He pointed out that 44% of library journals contain book reviews and that the writing of reviews is quite an art in itself. He also stressed that responsible editors have a well defined policy on book reviewing, both with regard to the titles to be selected and to the type of reviewer invited to do the job; guidelines for reviewers are desirable to avoid an imbalance in length and depth.

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Davis also referred to certain categories of ephemera which might well be used to fill up space without detracting from the scholarly and professional quality of the journal. Such ephemera might include scholarly notes, association and personal news, announcements of meetings, illustrations and reports of professional events, and even a certain type of chitchat.

In the discussion of Davis's paper, interesting comments were made on such diverse issues as the need for a book review editor, the various types of book reviews and the occasional need to protect the author of a book against "assassination" reviews, the problem of getting books reviewed by a certain date, the possible conflict of interests when the journal and the book for review have been published by the same organization.

Richard Dougherty (USA) followed with another practical and interesting address on costing and account keeping. His comments were based on several papers on the economics of journal publishing and members of the seminar were greatly helped by a number of handouts illustrating his analyses of costing and account keeping. It was a basic assumption, said Dougherty, that it was usually the professional association and not the editor who maintains and controls the accounts.

The organization of accounting data was explained and the importance of cash flow control was stressed. The elements of expenses and income were listed, and figures were cited to show the great variety of production costs. Dougherty drew attention to the consequences of misjudging the print run required and how it related to the pricing of a journal. He warned against expecting much income from advertising in a journal. He noted that a journal must, by contrast, be promoted to ensure sales. The effect of rising postal rates was also observed, particularly when promotion depends on the distribution of leaflets advertising the journal.

During the discussion questions were raised about the viability of small journals; 300-400 subscriptions versus 1000-2000 which often occur when a journal is "given away" as part of a membership fee. An important suggestion related to the bulk purchase of journals by national libraries and other large institutions for exchange purposes, a procedure which, it was thought, would help those countries who cannot afford hard currency

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to place subscriptions for all the professional journals they require.

The last session was addressed by Norman Horrocks (Canada) on standards as they apply to library journals. This was, in effect, a masterly summing up of most of the important points that had been made in the preceding eight sessions. Horrocks stated very aptly that as the last speaker he believed his function was to reinforce what others had already said - and he did just that with his well known humour and verve. Drawing attention to the existing literature on library professional journals Horrocks categorized these journals and related each category to the topics discussed during the seminar. Each segment of his talk was supported by carefully selected bibliographies, copies of which were distributed to all seminar members. Horrocks stressed that journals in librarianship above all others need to adhere to standards of production and contents. In his entertaining manner he offered guidance on editorial freedom, the role of editorial boards, copyright, advertisements, the use of non-sexist language, the need for dispassionate accurate reviews, and on plagiarism.

An unscheduled but nevertheless important set of questions was tabled by K.Menzinger (Germany) who raised these by way of discussion during two of the sessions. The questions represent a summary of what the meeting was about:

(1) What is the purpose of a professional journal?
(2) How important is the appearance of a journal?
(3) How important is the content of an issue?
(4) Does a journal need an editorial staff besides the editor?
(5) Could abstracts of articles improve the quality of a journal?
(6) Does a yearly index improve a journal?
(7) Should journals use articles in their original language or in translation?
(8) To what extent does the price affect journal subscriptions?
(9) How can we measure reader reaction?

Members of the seminar offered many different answers to each of these questions. Few of these answers were recorded but as the questions are fundamental to the whole business of journal editing they will naturally receive new responses from every generation and within different social settings. Their importance is such that they should always be kept before us.

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The closing session of the seminar was opened by D.H.Borchardt who expressed his pleasure at the fact that the seminar had reached the home-stretch with all participants still "alive". He reiterated the purposes and objectives of the seminar and noted with regret that there had been few participants from the so-called developing countries. However, he said that he firmly believed that we should do more for library journals for both developed and developing countries, because "we are all in a state of development anyway". He commented that the seminar has taught all that to edit a library journal is not an easy task, that not one of the participants had gone to a journalism class and that all are amateurs in a way, learning the skills on the job, that the seminar made all aware of the many problems of editing and the need for guidance. He mentioned the UNESCO seminar of 1972 which produced numerous recommendations of what should be done for the library journals and much regretted that these had not been realized.

On behalf of all present, the Chairman thanked Russell Bowden, Chairman of the IFLA Round Table of Editors of Library Journals for his great help in making the seminar a reality, the participants who made the seminar lively and interesting, and the speakers who shared their knowledge and expertise so that all benefitted from them. He also thanked Dr Hans Möller, Dean of the Graduate School of Library Science at McGill University for hosting the seminar, and for his work in coordinating the physical welfare of the participants.

Russell Bowden then summarized the main issues raised by the speakers and discussed by the participants, among which are:

(1) value or disadvantage of editors who are professional librarians or journalists
(2) advantages and disadvantages of changing editors
(3) themes issues of journals
(4) functions of editorial boards
(5) characteristics of a good editor
(6) what to do with commissioned or solicited articles, problem of refereeing
(7) should changes be made in contributed articles
(8) where to place references or citations

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(9) consideration of the size of journal for economy and aesthetics

(10) start new journals with simple objectives, perhaps a newsletter at first and let it grow and expand into a full journal

(11) problem of sending review copies to developing countries where sales are very poor; helping developing countries improve sales by promoting their journals

(12) abstracts and coverage of journals from developing countries in LISA is still poor, but LISA can cover them if abstracts are in English

(13) accounting system should be properly structured

(14) price of journals are affected by the number of subscriptions

(15) author's abstracts versus editor's abstracts

(16) advertising in journals is affected by the number of circulation; if journal circulation is below 300 (this number does not apply to developing countries), it is unlikely that advertisers who are keen on large membership list and mechanical reproduction of journals, will be interested

(17) an advertising rate card was proposed and a sample given the participants

(18) difficulty of getting people to write for journals

(19) standards for journal publishing

(20) obstacles to improvement of journals:

- (a) lack of editorial expertise or awareness of editorial practices
- (b) lack of secretarial or typing facilities
- (c) lack of office space
- (d) problems relating to printing and production
- (e) lack of writing skills among members of the library profession

After extensive discussions and deliberations of the issues presented by the speakers and those raised by individual participants, relevant to publishing of and improving library journals, the seminar made the following recommendations for transmission to IFLA through the RTELJ:

(1) That IFLA organize a seminar-workshop to improve writing skills of librarians of Latin America, the Arab countries, Asia and Europe, so that more articles will be written for the library journals, thus enhancing the publication of library journals

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especially in developing countries.

(2) That IFLA support a pre-session seminar on editing library journals during the IFLA Conference in 1984 to be held in Nairobi, Kenya for the African colleagues; that similar seminars be held also for other countries when demand is evident.

(3) That IFLA recommend to UNESCO to provide financial support to library associations that publish journals in order to improve the state of journal publishing in the regions where these library associations are located.

(4) That the IFLA Round Table of Editors of Library Journals put together a working document on guidelines for editors of library, information science and archives journals since they have been working on this since 1972.

(5) That library schools include in their curricula a course in journal publishing because it was observed that most editors of library journals do not have formal training in this area.

(6) That a directory of national, regional and international library science journals be compiled and that a bibliography on editorial work be also compiled.

(7) That guidelines be set out for authors writing for library journals.

(8) That a clearing house for book reviews be established that will facilitate exchange of book reviews.

(9) That publishers in developing and non-English speaking countries be encouraged to circulate their journals more widely.

The preparation of this report has been greatly aided by the notes taken during the seminar by voluntary rapporteurs, who subsequently made them available in an edited form.

D.H.Borchardt.
Seminar Director

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